

*Office of Civil Rights & Liberties,
Ombudsman and Traveler
Engagement*

**U.S. Department of Homeland
Security**
601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 20598



**Transportation
Security
Administration**

RE: Correspondence [REDACTED]

October 31, 2017

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for contacting the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Multicultural Branch within the Office of Civil Rights and Liberties, Ombudsman and Traveler Engagement regarding your screening experience at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL) in Florida. You indicated in your complaint that on September 18, 2017, you were required to obtain additional security screening, as the AIT alarmed in your groin area. You indicated that you were told there was an "anomaly". You further indicated that you did not feel comfortable with the pat-down received from the female TSO. You stated that you felt the TSO touching sensitive body areas on your person, during the pat down procedure. You also state that you felt that the TSO was intentionally touching your sensitive body area, even though the AIT alarmed.

TSA screens travelers to protect the nation's transportation systems and ensure freedom of movement. When employing any protocol or procedure, TSOs are required to and are trained to treat all travelers with dignity, respect, and courtesy and to exhibit exemplary and professional conduct in the performance of their duties.

The Multicultural Branch investigates alleged civil rights and civil liberties violations by TSA personnel. When determining whether a traveler complaint is substantiated, our office and/or TSA personnel at the Airport inquire into the traveler's complaint. Our inquiries involve the collection and review of eye-witness statements, close-circuit television footage, and any other evidence tending to prove or disprove a traveler's factual allegations. Our review to date does finds that the TSA officers and staff did follow Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in the overall screening and the pat down procedures. TSA screens travelers as they present themselves at the checkpoint. We have been in communication with the airport and the appropriate TSA Management staff provided an update to screening staff that TSA uses the word "alarm" and not "anomaly". In this regard, please be assured that TSA will continue to strive to improve our screening protocols to strike an appropriate balance between aviation security and civil rights and liberties.

TSO's must clear all alarms on your person and/or on your accessible property, prior to allowing you or any other traveler's to proceed. Our office has spoken with TSA staff at this airport, and

they have assured our office they continue to provide appropriate updates and information regarding screening all travelers who may alarm, while giving appropriate advisements for pat downs and any other TSA screening procedures necessary to clear any traveler.

Please note that TSA adheres to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) commitment to neutrality in our security screening programs. TSA must ensure that all persons and their accessible property passing through the security checkpoint undergo screening to protect against the introduction of weapons, explosives and incendiary devices into the sterile area of an airport and onboard an aircraft. There are many layers of security, seen and unseen, at the checkpoint. The manner in which TSA screens travelers and their accessible property depends, in some cases, on how they present at the checkpoint. Travelers processed through TSA checkpoints may undergo additional screening of their clothing or accessible property—where dangerous items are able to be hidden—but, TSA neither uses nor condones unlawful practices in our security screening activities. Pursuant to TSA's Civil Rights Policy, Transportation Security Officers are prohibited from basing screening decisions on a traveler's protected status. Therefore, all screening decisions are made based on the interests of aviation security and TSA's screening procedures are used on a wide section of the traveling population to ensure that all persons and their property undergo screening.

Regardless, TSA expects its personnel to treat all travelers with dignity, respect, and courtesy. If you do not feel that you received appropriate customer service during your screening, we apologize. If you have concerns during a future screening, you can ask to speak with a supervisor or a Passenger Support Specialist while at the checkpoint. In addition, TSA's website (<https://www.tsa.gov/contact/contact-center>) allows passengers to reach out to a Customer Service Manager directly by selecting "Complaint" and checking "Professionalism/Customer Service."

At any time, you may file a complaint with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at crcl@dhs.gov or via mail to:

Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Building 410, Mail Stop #0190
Washington, DC 20528
crcl@dhs.gov
(866) 644-8360
TTY Toll-free: (866) 644-8361

We hope this information is helpful and we appreciate that you took the time to contact TSA.

Thank you,

Multicultural Branch
Office of Civil Rights and Liberties, Ombudsman, & Traveler Engagement
Transportation Security Administration
Department of Homeland Security